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CASUS BELLI

A Satire : With Other Poems

By CHARLES CAMMELL

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CASUS BELLI: A SATIRE,

WITH OTHER POEMS.

CASUS BELLI

A Satire,

WITH OTHER POEMS.

BY

CHARLES RICHARD CAMMELL,

Author of 'Faeryland,' &c.

'Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'

St. Matthew, xxvi. 52.

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To

THE MEMORY OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I DEDICATE THIS

BOOK.

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'*War is a bestial frenzy (pazzia bestialissima).*'

LEONARDO DA VINCI.

'*O what are these,*
Death's ministers, not men, who thus deal death
Inhumanly to men, and multiply,
Ten thousandfold, the sin of him who slew
His brother; for of whom such massacre
Make they, but of their brethren, men of men?

* * * * *

For in those days might only shall be admired,
And Valour an heroick virtue call'd,
To overcome in battle, and subdue
Nations, and bring home spoils, with infinite
Manslaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
Of human glory, and for glory done
Of triumph, to be styled great conquerors,
Patrons of mankind, gods, and sons of gods;
Destroyers rightlier call'd, and plagues of men.
Thus fame shall be achieved, renown on earth;
And what most merits fame in silence hid.'

MILTON.

'*War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,*
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade.'

SHELLEY.

'*The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction. And he, who writes honestly, is no more an enemy to the offender, than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease.*'

DRYDEN.

'*And if I laugh at any mortal thing,*
'Tis that I may not weep.'

BYRON.

'*See, and confess, one comfort still must rise;*
'Tis this, though man's a fool, yet God is wise.'

POPE.

PREFACE.

JOHNSON in his Dictionary defines a Satire as 'a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured.' The end of the present satire is to censure the wickedness and folly of the war which now afflicts Humanity, with the hope, however forlorn, that my lyre may strike some chord of sympathy in the hearts of my readers, and thereby induce them to unite their efforts with those of the, alas! too small party of Peace.

The Verse is of the kind known as the heroic couplet: my models were Pope and Dryden, the acknowledged masters of this form of versification.

CHAS. CAMMELL.

March 14th, 1915.

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Casus Belli.

A Satire.

THERE were three Eagles who, from mountains high,
Viewed the great world that 'neath their gaze did lie;
And yet their searching glance naught seemed to heed
Save one small eaglet, of that eagle's breed
Whose pinions stretched the widest of the three,
And o'er its head raged discord terribly.
They spake; and foremost Austria, whose high look
No breath of contradiction seemed to brook;
Thus to the eaglet spake he, and the while
Prepared with blood his talons to defile.

Austria to Servia.

'Hearken and tremble, Servia: unto thee
The Eagle of the Dual Monarchy,
With wings displayed, as poised for present flight,
Majestic words of warning doth indite.

Five years and nigh four months have rolled away
Since, in the month of March on the last day,
Thou didst by solemn declaration give

CASUS BELLI.

Fair promises fraternal-wise to live
With us, the twofold heir of Rome the Great,
Nor longer with sedition to debate
Upon the accomplished deed of annexation,
When Bosnia rose unto the envied station
Of a rich Austrian province, great and free,
By Royal and Imperial decree.
Five years and nigh four months have rolled away;
What hast thou done—hast kept thy promise? Nay!
Shame be thy portion, Servia, scorn thy mead,
For thou hast sought with venomed words to feed
The aspirations of adventurous knaves,
Who would of Austrian slavs maks Russian slaves.
Thou hast inflamed by secret calumny
Contempt of our exalted Monarchy;
Yea, of this crime of hatred and contempt
Not ev'n thine officers have been exempt.
What was the end of thy nefarious schemes,
The upshot of thine intrigues and thy dreams?
'Twas on the eight-and-twentieth day of June,
Not yet hath passed away one fleeting moon,
Since the dark hour that bade the world to mourn,
That unto thee bequeathed eternal scorn.
Alas! the Archduke Francis Ferdinand
Fell by a vile assassin's bloody hand;
Alas! his august Consort by his side,
Faithful in life, in death still faithful died.

CASUS BELLI.

Ah! woeful chance that laid the illustrious low,
Ah! wanton crime that dealt so foul a blow;
Shameful the land from whence such shame is poured;
Shameful thy deed, shame be thy just reward.
Lo! by confessions and investigations
Thou, Servia, art accused before the nations!
Within the Servian city of Belgrade
The plot of this most horrid act was laid,
And the destroying instruments conveyed,
By Servian officers' well-proven aid,
Over the Bosnian frontier to the place
Fated to yield our woe and thy disgrace.
Too long have we in patient expectation
Looked for the end of all this machination,
Too long have we with tolerance abode
The issue of this multiplying load;
The end hath come, the issue we have borne,
Fallen our heir, our heritage forlorn.
Hearken and tremble! we demand of thee
Forthwith a sealed, attested guarantee
Henceforth from hostile intrigue to abstain,
And friendly with thy neighbour to remain.
Take then our note, and therein thou wilt find
Some other trifles writ of various kind,
To all of which a favourable reply
'Twere wiser to submit than to deny:
This note we have made known to all the Powers,

The time-limit is four-and-twenty hours.'
He ceased, and in the air rose hovering,
Impatient for the excuse that time must bring;
For, whatsoever Servia might reply,
He was determined she must surely die.
Meanwhile the second eagle, Russia hight,
Stirred his gigantic pinions at the sight,
And to the menaced offspring of his nest
Spake, while conflicting passions stirred his breast:
Servia he sought to comfort, Austria calm,
While he with haste began himself to arm.

RUSSIA TO SERVIA.

'Servia, thou fledgeling of the Eagle's nest—
True eagle, emblem of the land most blest,
The land where Liberty and Justice blend,
Whose sheltering pinions her vast brood defend;
Dost thou demand our aid in this thy trial?
Ask without fear, nor shalt thou know denial!
What though the Austrian kite, the German crow,
Hover with talons eager for the blow?
What! shall the eaglet stoop to swell their pride?
Nay, for the Eagle's wings are swift and wide.
Yet must we pause ere from our lofty height
We swoop destructive to the Austrian kite;
Still shall we spare if Austria will desist,
With power to crush, we are still pacifist.

But should our efforts unavailing prove,
Our mediation fail thy foes to move,
Oh! then ev'n Russia's love of peace must yield,
And Austria's doom by her own pride be sealed.
Fear not, illustrious child; from the far quays
Of frozen Baltic to the sunlit seas
Where Danube pours her waves, our rule benign,
Equal to all, by all beloved, doth shine;
From Poland, who would fain from power be free
And bound once more to mediocrity,
To where Siberia rapturously adores
The friend who fashioned her unequalled laws.
And thou too art our friend, our brother, child;
Although, alas! beneath our sceptre mild
Thou dost not our fraternal concord share;
Alas! for danger may not enter there.
Yet still we love thee, though beyond our fold,
And orgulous have been when we were told
How gentle, wise, and beautiful had grown
The lamb we mourned as strayed, the eaglet flown.
Ay, still we love thee, and in thy distress,
With our invincible support will bless
The righteousness of thy most holy cause.
Granted thy prayer; though patience bids us pause,
High be thy heart, for Austria's pride and threat
To-morrow in humility must set.'

He ended, and with wings expanded clove

The fearful wind, high hovering above;
But, while he soared presaging hideous wreck,
The German Eagle rose and loudly spake.

GERMANY TO THE WORLD.

'Hearken, ye Nations! ere the flashing sword
Of us, the chosen people of the Lord,
Descend as Michael's irresistible,
To dash your impious spirits down to Hell!
Hearken! the Eagle from his eyrie gazing,
Foresees, prophetic, many a city blazing,
Foresees with pain the outcome of your folly,
And as he gazes, yields to melancholy.
Hold, there is time! Let our advice be heard;
Let Servia fall; let Russia's foolish bird
Close once again her wings, and in disgrace
Hide 'neath their plumes her still more foolish face.
God's chosen people we, by God inspired,
In Justice armoured and in Faith attired,
Chosen by Him to counsel feeble men:
Hear and Obey!—or hear not, and what then?
Oh! terrible the earthquake that doth fling
Castles and spacious cities ruining;
Oh, terrible the red volcano glowing,
And belching molten missiles, and o'erflowing
With floods of lava the distorted scene
Where habitations had but lately been.

Ay, terrible; yet these are nought but plays,
Base imitations of the almighty ways
Of the great god of war, when he doth urge
His people the polluted world to purge.
Could ye conceive, oh, ye would die of fear!
Your very souls would die, could ye but hear
The trampling of the legions of the Lord;
Oh, ye would wisely shun, not whet the sword!
Be warned, be wise; let Russia stand aside,
And Servia her just punishment abide.
Have ye forgot, ye Kings of all the Earth,
Of Servia's present monarchy the birth?
Be warned, ye autocrats, and stand aside,
'Tis not for Kings to fight for regicide!
Let Servia perish, merited her fate;
Let Russia play the part that we dictate;
Let France our proffered patronage accept—
'Twere better than to weep the tears she wept
Not fifty years ago, her cities brent,
Conquered and shamed, a well-earned chastisement;
Let England recollect, ere 'tis too late,
Who helped her to attain her high estate;
Let her recall the Field of Waterloo,
Who were her foemen then, her friends were who?
Oh, be ye wise, nor seek untimely death,
For the ungodly there is Hell beneath:
Know that to us, his people, God is true,

That Austria's honour is our honour too!
We warn, advise, but we do not dissemble;
Beware, lest Earth from her foundations tremble.'
He spake, and Christendom let loose in War
Drowned the astonished world in floods of gore,
While hastened to the slaughter many a nation,
Infected by the same intoxication.
And first came France, by twofold motive stirred,
Both good and ill—I know not if she erred,
But in her mind she had no doubt at all
That Prussia was determined on her fall,
That Servia was at best a poor pretence
Concealing anti-French malevolence;
So sped she to the battle with hot ire,
Defence her plea, and vengeance her desire—
Moreover she was fettered fast to Russia,
And scarce could break her word for fear of Prussia.
Oh, France, fair France! as brave and bellicose
As when of old thy lordly banners rose
Over a sea of splendid blazonry,
Bright tokens of thy peerless chivalry.
Oh, France, why did thy noblest sons decay?
Until ev'n their base doom could scarce repay
For all the vice and folly of their race,
First the world's ornament, then her disgrace.
Ay, a fair ornament in sooth they were,
For even hideous war became more fair;

At least 'twas less revolting than before,
For Mars himself was ruled by courteous law.
But now, when all is dead ; when courtesy
Hath faded into spurious liberty,
When in all Europe not a man may save
His soul from being war's unwilling slave ;
Now, when the nations boast their cultured state,
War grows still more a thing to execrate
Even than when the wingèd lion of Asshur
Adorned great Nineveh with Orient treasure.
Man hath misused his brain ; his faculties
Soar from his native earth to brave the skies,
And ocean's hidden depths his mind explores,
Yet all this knowledge is but used for Wars.
All, all these conquests of the sea and air
Have yielded naught to Man save pain and care ;
All the vast strides that Science hath advanced,
The miseries of Man have but enhanced ;
Ev'n Medicine, which seems able to confound
My argument, scarce cures a shrapnel-wound.
Lo, I have wandered into reverie,
And left the project of my poesy :
Let us return to France, though nothing more
Remains to tell of her, save only War.
War, and for whom?—for ruling parasites!
War, and for what?—for those deceiving rights
That Robespierre bathed his hands in blood to gain ;

Yet only left for France a loathly stain!
No more, no more! the French still fight for France,
War still remains, though stripped of her romance,
The same 'neath Phrygian cap and tricolour
As once beneath the lily's golden flower.
France was the first; but forth strode England next,
Long had she hesitated, sore perplexed;
But now at last became, oh! strange to see,
Her old foe's friend, her old friend's enemy.
Oh, England! if 'twas Belgium's dying prayer
That urged thee this tremendous crime to share;
If 'twas the horror of her matchless wrong
That brought thee, a knight-errant swift and strong,
Over the restless seas to turn the scale—
None else had made the German onslaught fail.
If this the cause, methinks that thou hast done
All save the best: for, after all, but one
Straight course lies open to the people who
Still to the faith of Jesus would be true.
'Put up thy sword again,' thus saith the Lord,
'For all who draw shall perish by the sword.'
But if some meaner motive hath inspired
Thy feats of arms; if thou hast but desired
Increase of trade, or stronger to maintain
The empire of the sea where thou dost reign;
If motives such as these, ev'n partially,
Upon the eve of War had weight with thee;

Or if some shapeless terror thou didst see
In far recesses of Futurity,
Then, England, thou art guilty with the rest,
And wherefore deemest thou thyself more blest?
None, save the consciences of them that hold
Thy destinies, and God, these things behold:
I may not see—all that is mine to know
Is this, that thou hast given blow for blow.

Fiercer and more destructive grows the fray
And Heaven itself with night confounds the day,
While Christians brother-Christians strive to slay
By every art that Science can display;
Yet, while their murdered brothers groaning die,
Still to the Lord of Love and Peace they cry,
Nor heed that Christ forbade to draw the sword—
Each vaunts himself the Champion of the Lord.
The Christian Nations heathen allies hire,
Destruction of their foes their sole desire;
The Moslem Turk becomes the German's friend,
Indians and Japanese serve England's end,
While barbarous savages their battle-dance
Perform around the tricolour of France:
Thus strives each nation in hypocrisy,
Ev'n as they strive in force and cruelty.
Madmen, who let the tide of murder loose
Each for his own mean interest; the excuse
Or gain, or self-defence, or chivalry,

CASUS BELLI.

Dominion of the land or of the sea,
Alliance, or whate'er it chance to be,
I care not—Madmen, ye are murderers too,
In Earth or Heaven there is no place for you!
And all ye valiant warriors, ye who follow
Their lying counsels, ye are echoes hollow,
Aiders, abettors of your leaders' guilt;
How shall ye wash away the blood ye spilt?

A grey mist hangeth o'er the humid plain,
And rotting leaves the faded meadows stain;
The air is cold and still, the winds are sleeping,
And ev'n the clouds are weary of their weeping.
All things are weary, save the monster War,
Who with his flaming scourge the world doth score;
Widowed, the women with the clouds have dried
Their burning tears, and linger still beside
Their empty, silent homes: the children still
Play, heedless of grey skies and griefs that kill.
To Northward, thousands 'neath the ominous gloom
Are careless flung into a common tomb,
And o'er their oosy grave doth mocking Fate,
Smile to behold them lie with those they hate,
And mingle their black bones in foul decay
With bones of brothers they but sought to slay.
To Eastward, thousands on the earth lie dead,
And dye the waters of the rivers red,
And many a valley with their horror fill,

And feast the bird of prey on many a hill.
Oh! there is blood upon the loathing soil,
And murder is for man his daily toil;
All this to break the ennui of some court,
Some would-be Bonaparte's unholy sport;
To gather fame for some vain monarchy,
Or commerce for some mean democracy;
All this the web that Patriotism weaves,
Spun from the lies credulity believes;
All this, the hate, the blood, the nameless graves,
Is but the wage that tyrants pay to slaves.
And yet how may I blame the brave that lie
Down in the gloom, unmurmuring there to die;
While at mine ease I trace their epitaph,
Or seem at Man satirical to laugh:
'*And if I laugh at any mortal thing,*
'Tis that I may not weep'; for sorrowing
Cannot amend the sorrows of mankind,
While satire oft hath opened eyes most blind.
Not mine the Muse to censure or condemn,
I do but seek the tide of war to stem,
Although my words that bid the storm to cease
Are but as pebbles for the bridge of Peace.

End of Casus Belli.

SONNETS.

SONNET UPON WAR.

PITY with overwork hath nigh been slain,
Horror doth perish of his own excess,
Wisdom hath fallen, and all reason fled.
Murder, and Tyranny, and Madness reign
Over a world that dieth of distress ;
All things save Pain and Cruelty are dead.
Children of God, oh, wherefore are ye wed
To wickedness and folly? Ye were formed
In your great Father's likeness and ye mar
His sacred image. See, your hands are red
And foul with blood ; the cities ye have stormed
Send up their smoke to Heaven, where every star
Shall, in her loathing of ye, veil her light
And shroud your misery in endless night.

2nd Sept., 1914.

SONNET.

WITH blue of Inde the vaulted Heavens are dyed,
Of azure dyes most fair. The stars enwoven
Upon the wondrous texture seem to hide
Their splendour from the Moon, whose glance hath cloven
The night, and left a slot of shadowy gold
Behind her, like a bark enchanted driving
Over an Orient sea, where stars behold
Their beauty mirrored and the mermaids diving
Around the pearl-strewn caverns of the deep.
Fain would I follow thee, bright bark, to-night,
And ever in thy broad, clear sea-way keep
My roving vessel; for, methinks, thy light
Could pilot me and mine to lands afar,
Where Christ is King, and no man dreams of war.

7th Sept., 1914.

SONNET.

TO LEONARDO DA VINCI.

THERE was no shadow whose deep mystery
Could hold a secret from thy searching eyes;
Nor azure born of blue Italian skies,
Where the broad heavens meet the emerald sea,
Whose subtle hue could foil thy mastery;
Even the illusive smile that wanton lies
On woman's lips a moment ere it dies
Yielded herself a prisoner unto thee.
Methinks I see thee crowned with golden hair,
And in thy glance the wisdom of the earth
That thou hast stolen from stars, and waves, and wind:
Fashioned by God beyond men wise and fair,
Loveliest and most marvellous ev'n from birth;
Thy like the world may seek, but scarce shall find.

THREE SONNETS UPON CUSTOM.

I.

LORD, without Thee the spirit may not rise
Above the world, away from worldly things,
Nor see the works of Man with other eyes
Than man beholdeth them: a close veil clings
Around the earth, and all who breathe the air
Of its dull atmosphere must ever fare
Adown the same, long, winding road that all
Have followed since the mist-enveloped ball,
Whereon we dwell, was fashioned, Lord, by Thee.
So in each other's footsteps till the end
Of all time shall Man tread, save that by Thee
His eyes be opened; Thou alone canst rend
The veil of the great temple Man hath built,
The tomb of reason, and the home of guilt.

II.

EVEN as the veil in Herod's temple hung
Between the people and the Holy Place,
And ever like a nameless shadow clung,
Hiding the secret splendour of God's face;
Until upon the Cross the Saviour dying

Rent the close fabric priesthood had imposed,
And bade the world like to an eagle flying
Rise to the knowledge that His word disclosed:
So doth the veil of Custom ever here
Shadowy hang between its weaver Man
And his Creator; though God dwelleth near,
Man doth not dare his self-made veil to span,
But lingers in the gloom where Heaven's light
May bring no dawning to disperse the night.

III.

OH, Freedom!—to at length be wholly free
From fetters that the ages past have wrought
About Man's weary limbs. Oh, Liberty!—
To be as free in action and in thought
As the cool wind that stirs the mighty sea:
This, Lord, my prayer; hearken, my God, to me!
Tear down the curtain that alone can hide
The potencies that rule the oceans wide,
Waters of boundless space, whose golden isles
Roll with their changing generations ever;
That I, beyond the mists that Thou dost sever,
May venture upwards through the dark defiles
Into the light above, to learn and show
The wonders that the Lord would have Man know.

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